Minutes
Point Board Meeting
November 9, 1972

Jerry Mander hosted the meeting at his place on Filbert St. in San Francisco. Board members present besides Jerry were Mike Phillips, Huey Johnson, Dick Raymond, Stewart Brand, and Bill English. Steve Radcliffe was the recording secretary.

The session got started at the ungodly hour of 8:30 or so A.M. with an introduction of the Elijah, Chick Callenbach, who is editor of Film Quarterly, author of Living Poor With Style, and has a novel in progress called Ecotopia, a futuristic novel laying out the concept of a stable state society in which everything is recycled... having a decentralized, anarchistic structure "composed of a welter of competing small publications, and in which everybody argues all the time." By way of defining his role in the Point meeting he asked to be called an Ecotopian Militant, a visitor from the year 1995. Follwing a rap on Ecotopia, Bill English was asked to give a report...

Bill English report

Bill reiterated that he was resigning from Point, saying that he was very heavily into Xerox research unrelated to Point, which cut down too much on the time he had available for Point. He mentioned that he had given a $5,000 grant to a recently graduated lawyer who wanted to get into social causes immediately without wasting too much time hassling for bread, then described his visit with Steve Baer, who is building a house to test energy conservation concepts, specifically the "zone system" (is that right?) of solar heating. Bill said that Steve's work was quite interesting, but that Steve didn't want to get into it as a business, which cramped its usefullness as a Point project.

Chick asked Bill if Steve Baer was into biodegradable housing, and Bill said no which initiated a long rap, most of which was Stewart's comments on John Todd and the New Alchemists, a communal group on Cape Cod. Stewart gave a technically detailed description of the biological means through which New Alchemists is creating a totally self-sufficient environment. He mentioned use of fish ponds fed with red worms skimmed off the top of garbage beds (?), housing structures made out of living materials, ingenious windmills, and a whole bunch of other stuff. Then he talked about the commune itself, how its made up of mature adults who are into a crucial project without any conceivable end, in contrast to a good many communes put together by teenagers without real long term goals and whose scene tends to fall apart after they've put the physical structure together and find themselves without much to do. New Alchemists has a constant influx of creative activity due to new people, largely ex-professional scientists, showing up with new energy. Stewart said something about New Alchemists getting a similar commune together in [illegible] (?).

Huey ventured why not get a New Alchemists group in the San Francisco area, which Stewart thought was a good idea and suggested sending somebody from here to Cape Cod to get immersed in it.

At about this point, Stewart announced that he was firing himself as president

of Point, due to being into too many other time consuming things, which would also necessitate his resigning his board membership. He seemed to be saying that only the timing was uncertain, but everyone else insisted on terming it "indefinite," meaning forever. Stewart nominated Mike as the new president, and this was put into effect almost instantaneously. Despite cries of "Speech, speech" Mike opted to get serious right away, and began talking about an agenda.

Mike started by saying that he would need administrative help to keep himself sufficiently free. This was agreed to, and it was left to Mike to find himself an assistant (who is Dick Austin. Hi Dick). Mike also said that he would prefer to have the Point office in San Francisco, which met with general agreement, and this led to some discussion of the Menlo Park office, with the feeling being that it should probably be closed.

Amidst this there was intermittant discussion of who should be Point's Treasurer with Lois emerging as the best candidate.

There was some discussion as to just what the administrative staff should do -- this seemed to remain rather nebulous. Huey contended that the administrative staff should help to inspire board members by getting reports and other information distributed in a more timely manner. Jerry took issue with the word inspire, saying that the staff should play the role of non-interpretive information hub. From that point he speculated on how the information should be passed around, suggesting revolving small groups as a media.

There followed some discussion of the idea of preparing a list of grants to include short descriptions of the grants by the person who gave it, plus date and size of grant, name address and phone number of recipient. Possible use as an organizing mechanism, and as a basis for preparing the Annual Report. Jerry made a motion of all this which was seconded and passed.

Huey suggested preparing a job description for administrative staff and a definition of Lois' role, and someone mentioned briefing Lois on the dangers inherent due to recent legislation. There was no vote on this but there seemed to be general agreement.

Dick mentioned that he had given $5,000 to the Zen Center, and Jerry said that he had given a $15,000 agent grantto Norma Whitaker, who was still in Los Angeles but would probably come to San Francisco very soon and organize a public interest PR firm. Jerry also talked in glowing terms about a group called Pacific Change, a consulting service to foundations which helps radical communities get foundation money.

Jerry launched a long rap on the philosophy of Point's activities (which surfaced again and again through the rest of the day). There seemed to be general agreement that Chick's earlier description of Ecotopia as a stable state system was quite similar to ideas expressed about Point, in that the board utilizes a decentralized format and is collectively organized to spread power around. There was considerable discussion and debate on just where Point stands on a collectivist-individualist continuum, and where it should stand. Jerry said that he was thinking about using his discretionary funds to set up a collective, to some extent as an experiment to yield perspectives on his feeling that the Point board should be more of a cohesive whole.

(Hereabouts, Chick got up, wobbled off with his legs pressed strangely together, then returned a few moments later muttering "The bladder is the curse of political meetings.")

Stewart said that he has changed his mind from his earlier position, and that he now favors more explicit, extremely demanding and perhaps even impossible standards. He said that he would like to see the Point board come up with a three-sentence definition of what Point is all about. Everyone seemed to agree, but no specific definitions were voiced.

Chick offered the analogy that board members were like gardeners, having the same general purposes and similar knowledge, but in now way obligated to grow the same plants. Huey tossed out the analogy of diamond mining, in which you have to start a lot of mines in order to have reasonable prospects of hitting on a few of them, whereas if you limit yourself to a few you may not hit at all. He then said that he thought Point's purpose was to bring strong individuals together to pursue their own ends and learn from each other at the same time.

Chick commented on collective vs. discretionary disbursement of funds to the effect that exagerated emphasis on either one has inevitable drawbacks, that it was hard to tell which was worse, and that anyway a real balance between the two could be arrived at in practice much better than by definition.

Jerry pointed out that there had already been implicit group disbursements, then went on to say that he felt that there was root agrement, despite different metaphors, that a stable ecology is of central importance.

Huey noted in relation to discretionary spending that each member has his own field of specialty, which necessitates some focussing individually, though of course each individual desires to branch out.

Dick alluded to the term "godf~~a~~athers", which he had suggested at the previous meeting, to the effect that each individual brought with him his own constituency, which made Point a syndicate pooling diverse interests. He also said that he felt that the group shouldn't insist on a common philosophy.

Huey said something about "another baby being born, more comfortably this time."

Experiment with the lists

It seemed that, although numerous good comments were being made, the discussion wasn't quite coming into focus, and in this light Chick suggested an experiment--each individual made up a list of ten things he would like to see done, or changed, in contemporary society (although in practice the format broadened out). The initial idea was to see how many items whould show up on how many lists, thereby giving a more concrete sense of what the group shared in common. After everyone had made a list they were read off around the room. Numerous items sparked off potential raps, which were for the most part suppressed in order to complete the reading. (The lists have been compiled separately).

After the lists had been read there was some rap about the items, and then about the experiment as a whole. Jerry said he was xxxxxxxxxx struck by the amount of agreement that surfaced and Dick said that he wouldn't disagree with any of the items. Jerry wondered what would happen if _____(an eskimo) or Angela Davis

were included, would there be the same agreement? Most people thought no.

Stewart suggested trying the experiment with the Creative People List, which, besides being interesting in itself, might turn up some sorting principles. Mike got turned on by this idea, saying that it could help to get some of the people together. Dick saw the possibility of a Point conference growing out of it, whereby speakers could be called in to help fill gaps in the board members knowledge. Stewart looked at it for the possibility of finding the most far-out projects.

Jerry came up with two more analogies by way of elucidating Point's stance. He talked about Koestler's Janus-faced holons (a holon in general being any entity which functions as a whole in relation to its parts, and as a part in relation to a larger whole) which must maintain a simultaneous looking-inward toward its own maintenance and growth, and looking-outward toward its actions within its environment. Then he gave an inspiring speech about slime molds, which exist as individual cells devouring dead leaves until there get to be too many of them and too few leaves, at which time they pull together into a slug which slithers off to another part of the forest and disband into individual cells again. For some curious reason this made everyone think about lunch, and the session broke up.

(Lunch was preceeded by a razzle-dazzle basketball game won handily by Mike and Steve despite Huey's unstoppable drives and Chick's tacit double dribble privileges)

Afternoon Session

The afternoon session went around and around and around on the problem of succession, with numerous stops and starts, fragmentary expressions, etc. The secretary got very confused as to what was going on, and didn't get many intelligble notes.

Initially there was some debate on Dick's proposed resignation from the board, due to his desire to stay with some projects already started, with the upshot that everyone was against it.

For a while talk centered on selection principles, but with no one settled upon. Various people recalled the criteria for original board: professionals with time, but with work of their own, having low ideology and high delivery, group synergy... Stewart suggested creating sub-boards serving as farm teams, and Huey thought about giving money to agents and having them disperse it to turn up new talent. Jerry wondered about a non-star, and Stewart talked about getting a higher level of delivery and wider representation. Bill suggested a lottery.

Then a long period was spent discussing woman candidates, chiefly Lady Barbara Ward Jackson, Alice Tepper Marlin, and Ginny Baker. Stewart gave an inspiring speech in favor of Ginny, and Mike expressed a high opinion of her. Huey spoke about a woman from Nevada _____(?), who seemed very impressive also. It turned out that everyone knew Ginny except Jerry, who resolved to meet her.

Jerry suggested an alternative, an all woman board, which was discussed at length giving rise to comments like: Would permit the present board to remain all male; but, on the other hand, not necessarily; Sounds like we're playing God; wouldn't they resent being lumped together arbitrarily by us? -- how about us picking two women

and letting them pick the remainder?; it would mean an experimental answer to the charge that men never give women any real authority, because we'd just be saying, here's a bunch of money do what you want with it. The idea didn't seem to work into anything clear and definite, but left the impression that it was worth looking into further.

Mike suggested that the drift of the whole rap for the previous two hours was off base because it had had the wrong motives to begin with, i.e., looking for a "woman" in order to escape charges of sexism, rather than looking for a "person" who was well qualified ("who just happens to be a woman?" someone said)

The discussion of succession seemed to run out of gas without having reached a conclusion, although it did appear successful from the vantage of getting people's feelings out into the open, eliminating unlikely options, and clearing things up to some extent. Jerry said that he felt he was a lot closer to being able to make a decision, and Stewart said he had settled on his candidate.

Opening Soon? -- The Last Whole Earth Catalogue

With everyone nearly horizontal from battling succession, Stewart got some juice moving again explaining about the musical. It seems that he got a call one evening from Edward Padulla, a Broadway producer (Bye Bye Birdie) who was in L.A. for the opening of his most recent production. He said he wanted to make a musical out of The Last Whole Earth Catalogue (Jerry interjected "It's so corrupt I can't stand it") At any rate, Stewart flew down to talk to him, and amidst a heavy rap on the apocalypse, discovered that he was serious and apparently had read the catalogue. He wanted to farm it out to some song writers, etc. and see what they came up with. Stewart said he wasn't sure what the songs would sound like, but that it might mean some money for Point and that it would be interesting to deal with some Broadway people and see where their heads were, and so he was throwing the idea out for the board's consideration.

Jerry said that he'd worked on Broadway in the past and that it was completely fantasyland, the people there just weren't attached anywhere. Mike wondered what this would mean about Stewart's chances for anonymity. Jerry said that he was amazed at himself, but that he was for it. Would Point have a say in casting and who did the songs and script, like could they get Jerry Garcia to do the music? Stewart said he thought that part was open. Jerry, who was really getting into it by this time, wondered about the cast--young hip actors, the La Mamas, the Committee, could be good.

Mike thought that the idea sounded like rewriting the Catalogue in an archaic script.

Dick worried that it would risk the name and reputation of the Catalogue. "What would we think if we heard that The Greening of America was about to open on Broadway?" The whole thing, if not done properly, could risk philosophical integrity. Stewart countered with Kesey's experience--the shows were a rip off, but didn't tarnish Kesey's reputation. Besides, it could be good, and might make money for Point.

"How much?" Somebody wondered. Chick mentioned that 56 out of 59 Broadway shows last year lost money. Jerry said they'd have to insist on a big advance, and discussion ended with agreement that the whole thing would proceed through lawyers, initially

finding out how much they could get as an advance and if they could be in on production decisions.

Talk shifted to Stewart's possible publication of something in Rolling Stone that would include inside details about Point, about how there was beginning to be a reading public for foundation material and how certain things should be said for the sake of honesty. Mike said he thought the proposed article would probably be painful, to some extent, but that he was for it. He mentioned that the only two books out on foundations didnt tell what was going on inside, but that "we should be willing to defend what we"ve said." Dick pointed out that it really came down to the principle of open dislosure (which Stewart broadened in a comment that the Left has been very slow to disclose its methods). Dick prophesied that "the whole field of foundations is about to explode."

International, Blue Sky, and others

Huey wanted to talk about international projects, and mentioned a conference in Japan which needed a keynote speaker (anybody interested? you say you want to go to Japan, huey?), Jerry said that he had given $5,000 to an English group fighting the SST there, and then asked if anybody knew that there were these half-dozen construction/land development companies who owned all the trees in _____(?) and were cutting them all down. Huey not only knew, he had given some money to help fight them, and then he wanted to know if anyone wanted to contribute to the Sierra Club Defense Fund, since the Sierra Club was bieng hassled by a $20 million suit. Penetrating stares. Hey Chick, spare change?

No, but Chick did have a blue sky idea. How about buying up a ton of Communist Chinese bicycles and giving them to a small city for transportation? There would be so many bicycles all over the place that there would always be one available wherever you went. Comments: impossible in an urban area because people from other areas would steal them. Who would keep them repaired? How about a small city several hundred miles from the next major city? What about Honolulu?

Dick brought up a propane conversion project in Santa Cruz (?), and then flashed on the idea of short-circuiting grants, that is, giving money to obvious fuck-ups who would thereby get perplexing publicity. This set off a lot of hilarious fantasy, with some prospects of translation into projects. But nobody said, yea, let's do that.

Mike said he thought blue sky rarely got off the ground because everbody was flashing on the big steps, but nobody was taking the little steps necessary to get them going. He talked about the lack of followup and research, and said that his administrative assistant could help along this line.

There was more talk about Point's public relations role, with several people feeling that Point should take a more militant approach in pointing the finger at the bad guys via the media. Chick suggested encouraging certain types of writers, namely, those who were experts in a given field but not a member of that field's establishment. He also said that he thought foundations should take the riskiest risks possible.

As the session closed down, it was decided that Mike would host the next session, at a time and place to be determined. On the agenda would be succession, blue sky, loose ends. Someone suggested that everyone should come in with his work plans for Point, and this led to the idea that everyone should go back over his original position paper to determine how views had changed over the year. Both of these seemed good, and led to the idea of asking the next Elijah for a position paper.

Everybody said goodbye to Bill, then to each other, and split.

As the session was breaking up Jerry said that if I had any observations on the meeting to feel free to append them to the minutes. Yes. Here:

In general I was really impressed with the high level of creative energy being generated and moved around--having just escaped from one of the most absurd energy garbage dumps going, the contrast was especially sharp. But what I'd like to comment on specifically is the experiment with the lists. Recall Jung's work on the collective unconscious. Actually, any group of people who function together over a period of time gradually form a common territory within the collective unconscious, their own "group head", which is more or less subtly distinct from other group heads (though not necessarily easily accessible to consciousness). Now it seems to me that "agreement" is not something intentionally put together out of abstract philosophical concepts, but is rather something which grows organically within the group head. Which means that agreement exists (in whatever state of wholeness) prior to anyone's realizing it, and, more importantly, that it transcends whatever superficial disagreement may arise. Thxx Thus it seems to me that the experiment with the lists was essentially an exercise in raising pre-existent agreement into mutual consciousness, and the results suggest that substantial agreement already exists among Point members and, speaking more broadly, that Point's group head is relatively very together (however, most group heads seem to be dangerously schizophrenic--maybe its easy to look good in contrast).

Also, I think that in general the main trouble with definitions of a group's purpose is that these definitions are abstractions laid out with only a superficial understanding of the agreement which already exists (and thus very little congruent with it), and hardly any feeling for the group head. Thus the importance of raising agreement into consciousness before any formulations are attempted. Since there seems to be some uncertainty among Point members--on the conscious level--it might be a good idea to get together for a session of experiments designed to bring existent agreement further up into consciousness. Concerted dealing with ultimate questions (who am I really, what if anything survives death, does life have a purpose, what is it, etc.) can be helpful along these lines since it tends to blast you on out beyond temporary superficial differences. Also, the literature on encounter groups, tailored to suit your own purposes, might suggest some good experiments.

Thanks for letting me sit in on all that juice

Steve

Lists of "Like to see changed", or whatever, items

Bill

1. Stabilized ocean
2. Personal transportation without pollution/congestion/high energy
3. Participative society - people aware and involved
4. De-urbanized society, as an option - work and live together
5. Reduced energy needs and clean sources
6. Personal information tool and toy - dynabook
7. Way to preserve personal space equitably
8. Personal freedoms preserved
9. Waste disposal
10. Preservation of crafts, skills
11. Awareness of self, control of self

Feel (Michael 9 years old)

1. How do people get together?
2. Single clothing shelter
3. Romer's rule - today how operating?
4. Man can fly - how?
5. Chemical communication?
6. How do we smell? (do it)
7. What are whales?
8. Genetic information in facial and body patterns
9. Sound memory/smell memory
10. How do two wheel cycles work?

Huey -- Believing all things are possible these are areas I'm interested in learning more about and helping on

1. World peace
2. Population control
3. end individual suffering
4. Development of individual life pleasures
5. Satisfactory sharing of world resources
6. Establishment of workable land policy for survival
7. For me to become more knowledgeable in music, art, poetry
8. To actually produce new art personally
9 To participate in athletic or physical and mental health...concepts relating to physical activity
10. Find a satisfactory way to spend more time with my family, particularly in sharing the child raising (like always leaving meetings early)

Dick -- interest in problems without present solution

1. Honest car repair service
2. Mini-village residential compound with open space
3. Anti-gravity device
4. Transportation without cars
5. Sewerage disposal without sewer systems
6. Free phone service for all
7. Continuing athletics (like adult education) for entire life
8. Cultural acceptance of individual differences (You are ok)

Dick's list continued

9. Economic system based on giving (end the Era of Greed)
10. Diet theries into practice
11. Baby discussions with respectability
12. Levels of consciousness
13. Everyone a musician

Chick Questions

1. How can extractive mining be entirely avoided? (recycling of existing metals)
2. Can more plastics be made biodegradable?
3. What would be economics of a wisely contracting economy?
4. What is the most comfortable & natural small social grouping like? (extended families?)
5. How can economic organizations be decentralized & otherwise be made smaller scale?
6. What is the optimum size of a stable population country?
7. Are their conceivably direct biological sources of electric current?
8. Can housing be produced in a fully-automated industrial manner? Clothing?
9. Can the consumer boycott be directed successfully at individual ecologically harmful products?
10. Can print be given a finite fade-resistant life, so that paper can be re-used without re-pulping?

Jerry

1. How can people ~~xxxxxxx~~ regain a sense of themselves as plants in a living universe
2. What is the meaning of media & what can be done about it - anti-diversity, anti-democracy, anti-equality
3. Koestler: all organisms are Janus-faced holons -- _____toward Transcendent (unity) ( ) & the same time as individual assertiveness--how to encourage that within human and ecological limits
4. How do we achieve communication with rocks and trees, and be willing to give them equal time & _____ -- _____--loving one's sense of _____ -- humility
5. How do we give up control on all levels--of other living things, of ourselves
6. How can we accept the wisdom ~~xf~~ and sanity of children & how can we spread that knowledge
7. How do we change & open up...world consciousness without doing it ourselves?

Stewart

1. Discrediting of monoculture
2. Understanding of the function of 'self' consciousness
3. Relaxation about death/dying
4. "Soft" war conflict forms replacing present warfare
5. A big fascinating story to be in with everybody
6. Living (biological) ~~xxxxxing~~ technology -- housing, computers, distribution, etc.
7. Dynamic steady-state or planetary energy _____: expanding state of evolutionary exploration
8. Personal bodily flight
9. The discovery of Atlantis and plenty of artifacts.